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ABSTRACT

A study sought to explore and define the nature of gendered religious socialization in a non-denominational Christian school, using the lens of submission theology. Many Christian schools today are less rigid in their rules and doctrines than formerly and are no longer separate from the world. This study was conducted in one such school, where a lack of doctrinal absolutes became important to understanding the way gender is played out in this school. Central to understanding this study is the concept, known as submission theology, that the wife has less authority (specifically spiritual) than her husband. Data are drawn from a case study that included visits to an evangelical Christian school with an enrollment of 150, pre-K through grade 12 students. Most students and faculty have conservative Christian beliefs with more Pentecostal/Charismatic tendencies. Drawing heavily from transcriptions of student/teacher interviews, the issue of the submission of women among the students became a central theme. Issues of submission were found in their discourses regarding leadership, in the teasing and interactions among students and between students and faculty, and by the example set through lack of doctrinal absolutes and the favoritism shown by faculty toward males. This school provides a unique opportunity to see a fragment of the intersection of religion and gender. (Contains 32 references.) (BT)

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"So What if I Pray Like a Girl": Gendered Religious Socialization at a Christian School.

by Stacey Elsasser

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Stacey Elsasser

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"So what if I pray like a girl": Gendered religious socialization at a Christian school

> You see the girls wanted to have that respect that you're supposed to treat women with in the church, but they didn't want to have that, the other. They didn't like the domineering. And actually, when it first happened, they were so happy that they boys stood up and said, "We are the spiritual leaders of this school. We're never going to be blessed until we take our male authority; until we volunteer to pray."
> - Mrs. Hunter, English Teacher at Charity

Using the language of Promise Keepers, Mrs. Hunter explains a recent power shift from the girls to the boys at Charity, a non-denominational Christian school located in south central United States.

> Becky: (senior) You hear a guy say 'Well, I'm a guy and you need to listen to me'"

> Susan: (junior) They'll [boys] come right up to a girl and say, 'You must submit to me because I'm a man.'"

Becky and Susan are describing the boys' domination and the mis-use of Biblical theology that permeates the experience of girls at Charity. The intersection of gender and religion at Charity acts as both an example and a mirror for the institution that ultimately shapes their reality, the evangelical church.

While studies regarding gender and churches (e.g. Gallagher & Smith, 1999; Griffith, 1997; Stacey & Gerard, 1990) and gender and schooling (e.g. AAUW, 1992 & 1999; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Eitzen & Zinn, 1992) abound, little research has been conducted looking at the sociological aspects of evangelical Christian education. Yet the 11,000 or more evangelical Christian schools, serving 1.5 million students (Wagner, 1997) occupy a significant place in the educational landscape of the Unites States. With

issues of truth, righteousness, and freedom as their calling cards, evangelical Christian school families pay as much $4000 per year to have their children shaped by evangelical doctrines and beliefs. Focusing on the specific "institution within an institution," Christian schools, one can see a microcosmic example of the socializing force of the macrocosm, the evangelical church, regarding gender. The purpose of this article is to explore and define the nature of gendered religious socialization, using the lens of submission theology.

Approaching the Intersection

Growth Of Christian Schools

The modern-day connotation of a Christian school, one where academics and evangelical Christianity combine in an educational setting, began in the 1960's as a response to perceived growing social concerns, such as race relations, sexual promiscuity, secular humanism, and declining moral values (Wagner, 1990). Worry over these concerns and their impact on public schooling led to the growth of the private school market. Nine out of ten existing Christian schools began since the mid-1960's (NCES, 1993/94).

Current academic research on Christian schools includes Alan Peskin's (1986) "total world" of a fundamentalist Christian school and his conclusions that Christian schools were isolated from the world and separated from other denominations. Michelle Bollar-Wagner (1990, 1997) later debunked his view as out-of-date by using data that showed a dramatic increase in non- and multi- denominationalized Christian schools. Her study found that Christian schools are less rigid in their rules and doctrines and are no longer separate from the world. The study discussed here was conducted in one such school, where a lack of doctrinal absolutes, became important to understanding the way gender is played out in this school.

Submission Theology

Central to understanding this study is the idea that the wife has less authority, specifically spiritual, than her husband, known as submission theology. This belief comes from a passage in Ephesians 5:23 that states "the husband is the head of the wife" (Holy Bible, 1983). Other verses that support this theology include Genesis 3:16 which says the man shall rule over his wife, and I Corinthians 11:3 which restates

Genesis 3:16. Submission theology ranges from ultra-traditionalists who believe that women should not teach men or hold governmental positions, to egalitarians who believe that there is neither male nor female in function, both in the church or home (Jacobs, 1998). Most evangelicals hold a neo-traditionalist view in which women are seen as subordinate, but not unequal to men (Gallagher & Smith, 1999).

Gallagher and Smith (1999) explain that the evangelicals' gender ideology focuses on gender differences in family responsibilities which is based on the ideal of separate spheres for women and men that emerged during the late nineteenth century. Evangelicals argue that men and women have natural, even God-given essences such as masculine aggression, worldly wisdom, and rationality and its complement, feminine submission, purity, piety, and domesticity. Due to the family's increasing reliance on women's income and because the impact of feminism on evangelical discourse has been "profound and diffuse" (p. 215), evangelicals are beginning to see in their lived experiences what Gallagher and Smith call *pragmatic egalitarianism*. Submission theology is considered a rarely used "trump card" that is mostly symbolic and not a practical reality in the lives of modern evangelicals who face the commitments of a postindustrial economy. Gallagher and Smith describe the negotiation of gender within the evangelical church this way:

> It is in this slippery area between ideals and resources, intended and experienced, that we find gender negotiated, managed, and lived. In these processes, evangelicals negotiate gender in much the same way others of different or no religious world views do – borrowing from, resisting, and participating in the larger structures of which they are a part (1991, p. 231).

Methodology

Data in this article are drawn from a case study conducted during the spring semester of 1999 that included visits at least twice per week. "Charity" Christian School is located in a small city in the south central United States and has an enrollment of approximately 150, pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grade. The only non-public school in the city, it is 14 years old and supported with students from twenty-two evangelical churches in the city and surrounding area (representing approximately 50 - 60% of the area churches), and a school board consisting of members from four different churches. Charity is housed within a non-traditional Southern Baptist church that practices Pentecostalism, a segment of evangelicalism that places more authority in the Holy Spirit's work in a believer's life. This contradiction of having a Southern Baptist church

practice Pentecostal practices is representative of the denominational boundary crossing researched by Bollar-Wagner (1997) in which schools governed by a single church and adhering to their beliefs only are less evident in today's society; most Christian schools adhere to more ecumenical beliefs to "recruit" more students. This suggestion of ecumenicalism led to doctrinal confusion at Charity and created a space where the mis-use of the notion of submission theology could flourish.

Beginning with grand tour observations of the secondary school, the study progressed into using specific observations, shadowing, and non-formal observations such as eating lunch together and personal involvement in extra-curricular activities. Formal interviews involved nine students, 6 girls and 3 boys, and one teacher. Informal interviewing of students included all of the 21 ninth through twelfth graders with a gender ratio of twelve girls and nine boys and all of the 3 full-time teachers.

Doctrinally, the school adheres to the basic belief of a salvation experience as the only means of entering heaven, attributed to most evangelicals (Bollar-Wagner, 1990), but there are no written guidelines regarding this. Most students and faculty, especially in the secondary school, have conservative Christian beliefs that include more Pentecostal/Charismatic tendencies, such as emotional worship services and speaking in tongues, but do not adhere to the more fundamental beliefs usually associated with the Southern Baptist, much like the non-traditional church that houses it. Charity is seeking accreditation with the Association of Christian Schools International and will have to publish and adhere to their fundamental, evangelical beliefs: inerrancy of scripture; God as three in one; the deity, virgin birth, death, and resurrection of Christ; sinfulness of humanity and their need for salvation; resurrection of the saved into Heaven and the lost into Hell; spiritual unity of believers; and the Holy Spirit's work in the believer's lives (ACSI, 1999).

Drawing heavily from transcriptions of the student and teacher interviews, the issue of the submission of women among the students became a central theme. Issues of submission were found in their discourses regarding leadership, in the teasing and interactions among students themselves and between the students and faculty, and by the example set through the lack of doctrinal absolutes and the favoritism shown by faculty toward males. According to Gallagher and Smith (1999), women in the evangelical church are moving toward a more egalitarian and pragmatic role, yet there still remains the frustration and anxiety associated with a major social change. The girls

at Charity also participate in this change. Their position regarding submission remains in a state of flux, moving between attitudes of equity and docile submission.

Visiting the Intersection

Atmosphere at the Intersection

> Her dreams were so outrageous they could fill the sky.
> -from a short story by Nancy,
> used with permission

Understanding of recent events is important to understanding the present climate at Charity. This study situates itself during the 1998-1999 school year, the year when "the boys took over." Prior to this academic year, the girls outnumbered the boys more dramatically and were considered the leaders, academically and spiritually, of the school. The principal himself has four daughters aged 8-17 attending the school, while a 5th, recently graduated.

Evangelical Christian tradition dictates that men should be in leadership unless there is not a man spiritually strong enough; then it is permissible for a woman to take over. Starting with the 1997-1998 school year, the girls and the faculty "agreed in prayer" to ask God for spiritually stronger males. Mrs. Hunter, the English teacher, describes it this way:

> We have prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed and the girls have done it too, so they deserve it. They prayed so hard that the boys at the school would take spiritual leadership and be the leaders because they got sick of being the police. They got sick of "Now, boys, you're not supposed to spit and cuss at the lockers and you're supposed to be nice to us 'cause we're girls. You're supposed to not say things like "ooh, ooh, look at your boobs"; literally. It was so bad about 3 years ago because our boys had no Christian leadership at all. No Christian respect. They did not... You see the girls wanted to have that respect that you're supposed to treat women with in the church, but they didn't want to have that, the other. They didn't like the domineering. And actually, when it first happened, they were so happy that the boys stood up and said, "We are the spiritual leaders of this school. We're never going to be blessed until we take our male authority; until we volunteer to pray." I never had a guy pray the first whole year for lunch because we take volunteers to do lunch. Then the boys had this little mini-revival. Then, they took over and they got swelled heads this year.

The idea of "rightful leader" is part of the discourse of the Promise Keepers and their push to get men to "step up to the plate." Both of these phrases are used more

than once in reference to the turnover of power from girls to boys and the prevalent submission theology in general. The demasculinization of men in America has been highly touted (Bly, 1990; Keen, 1991) and Promise Keepers, with their aggressive language ("taking back our positions", "conquer the Devil", "spiritual leadership of males", etc.), has brought the evangelical church into the fray (Messner, 1997). The timing of the girls beginning to pray for more male leadership coincides with the peak of the Promise Keepers movement, around 1997. While Promise Keepers is on a downward trend and less men are attending their rallies, according to a recent report (Associated Press Wire Service, 1999), the effects are still being felt throughout the evangelical community and are definitely still felt at Charity.

Reminiscent of the old adage, "Be careful what you wish for, you just may get it", the girls got what they prayed for, strong males.

Discourse at the Intersection

> A female Christian, a lot of people think that they don't have as much authority and power as male Christians, like preachers, but God has given them the same authority as he's given men. If you have Jesus in your heart, you have the same power as a male. God's the same. God doesn't change. Even in the Bible there were women apostles and leaders everywhere.
> - Louise, senior

Reviewing the issue of submission from a theological perspective, the main controversy regards a verse found in Ephesians 5:23 that states "the husband is the head of the wife" (Holy Bible, 1983). This verse is considered a "gray area" in the Bible. A gray area is any biblical passage or social-religious tradition that either loses significance outside its socio-historical context, or in the case of Bible passages, may have multiple exegetical interpretations. Other examples would be the admonition by St. Paul for women to leave their hair long, which is no longer considered valid by most evangelicals and three examples which still have controversy attached to them due to the silence of the Bible: dancing, drinking, and cigarette smoking. Due to the fact that Charity hasn't written a doctrinal statement beyond that given by the ACSI, "gray area" issues have no concrete foundation to prove or disprove their use. Louise, a senior, mentions this in her interview. She states:

> They [the school faculty] don't teach Christian principles. They may enforce them, but most of the kids that go here haven't been raised in Christian families, so they don't really know. Even in

> Bible class they talk about the Bible, but we're not "taught" the Bible, we just read the Bible. You have to be taught how to live a good life. They do, but they should show it more. A lot of kids here don't go to church, so this is their only example.

Mr. Lincoln, the principal who also teaches the Bible and a Math class, mentions that while almost the entire secondary school embraces some form of Pentecostalism, he still has to be careful not to step on anyone's denominational beliefs. This lack of clear absolutes becomes an issue when, without a clear distinction being made of the school's belief regarding the submission of women, the students are left to decide this important issue for themselves based on the views of each other and the example of the faculty.

Stan, a sixteen year old senior, puts the theology of submission that the students and faculty believe into three categories: 1) women should totally submit and should follow the Bible's rules on the role of women entirely; (He thinks this is a twisting of the Bible, but that it does occur some at Charity.) 2) women should be equal and in charge as equally as men; 3) women should not be made to submit, but are not equals; that men control the relationship; and while submission is only for her husband and only if no one can make a compromise, women can make decisions on her own. (This surprisingly adheres to most Christian feminist teachings on the breadth of submission theology as well. e.g.: Keyes, 1993; Jacobs, 1998; Storkey, 1985; & Van Leeuwen, 1993.)

Stan doesn't believe Ephesians 5:22 applies only to husbands and wives, but also to men and women in certain situations, such as disagreement where no compromise is possible or matters of a spiritual nature. This idea of equality except in certain and specific respects, confusing as it is, is typical of the belief of most girls at Charity and most conservative evangelicals as well.

Among the girls at Charity, submission theology, and the nature of being a female Christian, ranges from senior Becky's "trying your best to get along with people and trying to not make mistakes" to senior Louise's "God has given women the same authority as he's given men." Susan, a junior, thinks being a female Christian means having less obligation to society and the church as the men. She says:

> If something goes wrong, they are the ones to blame. We have to go and help them. We're there to help them and we have to understand that we are below them, but not less than them. So we go along them and we support them to do what's right as they lift us up for what we are doing.

The idea of reciprocity in the relationship, even though it involves issues of power, is still evident. The students seem unable to draw the dividing line between the authority relationship of men and women and the authority relationship between husband and wife.

Harriet, a junior, defines submission this way, "Submission means to me to come alongside, or to agree with and support. It is a mixture of respect, humility, equality, and love." Surprisingly, Darren, a tenth grader who is considered the "nicest guy at Charity", thinks both "males and females need to submit to authority, but not to each other. Respecting each other doesn't mean obeying everything the guy says to the girls, or vice-versa." Permeating the student's dialogue concerning submission is the idea of authority and who is entitled to it.

Submission theology is infused into the everyday experiences of the students, especially the girls. For instance, Harriet, a junior, was trying to take charge of a worship service practice, but gave up when no one would listen to her. When Tom, a sophomore, took over everyone began to practice, which Harriet later inferred happens often. Also tied into the issue of submission is the nature of who has authority, who the leaders are. Since the girls had more authority and lost it, albeit voluntarily, there remains a sense of "being cheated;" the unfairness of the situation still hurts.

The Interactions at the Intersection

As I played I heard more of me than I heard of you
As I played I heard a voice that did not sound like you
- from a poem by Darren
used with permission

The primary mode of submission displayed was through what I termed "submissive teasings". This teasing ranged from reminding the girls of their presumed submissive position to forcing opinions on others through the use of Bible verses. These were both direct and indirect through a climate of gossip, argumentation, and silencing.

Teasing is an everyday occurrence on any school campus. Adolescent males use teasing to innocently show interest in a girl and/or to less innocently regulate her behavior by assigning the "bad girl" status (Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995). This is especially troublesome in a Christian school where chastity of the girls is expected and rewarded.

Students at Charity use teasing in a more personal and deliberate way. While it was observed that the girls sometimes participated in teasing, usually over matters such as appearance and academics, the boys used teasing more frequently and more personally, eventually turning their teasing toward issues of submission.

Barbara, a junior, describes the personal teasing directed at her as revolving around appearance issues as well being sheltered, while Louise, a senior, and Carla, a freshman, have felt their self-esteem lowered due to the teasing. Nellie, a freshman, left half-way through the semester, but casually related that she was teased constantly because she had Attention Deficit Disorder and did not act "properly", which to her was the way that was the most acceptable to the others. Susan also shared a similar experience to Nellie's in reference to teasing.

Both boys and girls were aware of the intimidating nature of teasing. Stan, the sixteen year old senior, has been the only boy in the 11/12 grade section for the past two years. He feels like he knows the girls well and addresses the personal dynamic of teasing.

> Researcher: Is there negative treatment at the school that puts the girls down?
> Stan: There isn't any from the teachers or Mr. Lincoln, but some guys tease too much. They take it too far and it tears the girls up.
> Researcher: Give me an example
> Stan: Once a guy called a girl a slut, but used different words and the girl was really hurt. The boy got in trouble and went to the girl and they made up, but to me it shows that the boys are way too personal in their teasing.
> Researcher: How serious a problem is it?
> Stan: People usually don't take it too seriously, but it can get out of hand. I think it's good though that it's usually resolved and isn't a huge problem.

Teasing that becomes too personal added to teasing that uses the Bible would be, and is, a lethal combination for those on the receiving end. Louise, Susan, and Becky bring this up in their interviews. Becky says, "You hear a guy say: 'Well, I'm a guy and you need to listen to me'' while Susan says, "they'll come right up to a girl and say, 'You must submit to me because I'm a man.'"

Mrs. Hunter relates that the boys will even tease her about submission although she does not go into details. She does mention though that her mood will set the tone

for the day, and if her mood is bad, she has on occasion been teased by the boys as follows:

> Mrs. Hunter: And they've also learned that it's okay to say; "You know, Mrs. Hunter's having a hormone time. She's in a bad mood today because she's having her time.
> Researcher: And the boys are saying this?
> Hunter: Yeah.
> Researcher: Some of the girls I have interviewed have said that it's a constant, that the boys constantly use that submission thing, that "I'm the boy, you have to listen to me"
> Hunter: Even to me [meaning they have said that she needs to submit to them.]

Most of the teasing, including the "submissive teasings", is defended by both boys and girls as being without meaning. Barbara, a junior, thinks the teasing is still better than it would be in the public schools, even though she has never attended them. Other students, and even Mrs. Hunter and Mr. Lincoln, think the teasing is harmless and part of the students everyday lives, especially because they are adolescents.

Tom and Bob are the recognized leaders of the school and are the main culprits for both "submissive teasings" and some of the more personal teasing. When asked about this during an interview, Tom admits he does this while Bob defends himself and Tom, saying the girls do it too.

> Researcher: A number of girls have said that they have been teased 'you must submit to me because you're a girl.' It isn't just one or two, It's been across the board.
> Bob: Yeah, I know what you're talking about. On the other hand, the girls tease us as well. What's that verse Louise brought up about how men and women will lead in discipleship...
> Tom: It goes both ways.
> Bob: It's not like we do it hardly at all,
> Tom: I have done it before, in the past.
> Researcher: Does it teach you anything that almost every girl has brought it up as something they don't like?
> Tom: I wish they would tell us. When we joke with them, they joke back and they throw things right back at us and so we joke back and than they joke back. It's kinda like a battle of the sexes thing. We don't really think anything about it, but then we hear this and its like okay if you have a problem with it, you need

> to come to us and we would stop. It wouldn't bother me if they said something.

Tom and Bob's obvious defensiveness is good evidence that they are aware of their actions. Mr. Lincoln, the principal, mentions after the study that he feels this area was dealt with at length earlier in the year and in his words, it was "dead and buried." When the researcher indicates that it seemed to still be present and in need of addressing, Mr. Lincoln still believes it is better left alone.

Teasing is common at Charity, much like any school. According to Taylor, Gilligan, and Sullivan (1995), it is used to regulate behavior of girls. It is interesting that the girls say the "submissive teasings" came into play after the shift in power from female leadership to male leadership had occurred. The boys are not fearful of losing their power since they are sure of their position as "rightful leaders," so it is doubtful that the teasing originates out of their feelings of vulnerability. Rather, it would seem that they enjoy using their new power and the sense of domination that comes with it. Tom and Bob especially like to use their power to get out of class frequently and spend long hours with Mr. Lincoln in his office, making sure everyone knows it. The boys also like to take over class events such as group projects and presentations even though it is obvious the girls in their group have a better grasp of the material. They will often use the girls for information and then direct the work of the group.

Tom and Bob, as the unofficially designated leaders of the school, take charge of any and all situations they are either given by authority or surrendered to by the girls. When asked about their roles as leaders, they defend it as a God-given right.

> Tom: I think it's easier [at this school] to be a boy. People look to guys a lot more for leadership.
> Researcher: Why?
> Tom: Because that's the way it's supposed to be. They try to follow the Biblical standards.
> Researcher: What in the Bible tells you that?
> Tom: The man is supposed to be the head. They [the girls] look more toward us.
> Researcher: Where do you learn that men are supposed to be the head of the household.
> Tom: Mr. Lincoln. He's really pushed for guys. I know myself and Bob, he's really pushed for guys to take leadership.
> Researcher: I called you in because everyone, boys and girls, when I asked who were the leaders, they would always say you two. Because you

are more spiritual and more outgoing. What do you think when you hear that?
Bob: That it's God. I don't want people to see me, I want them to see Jesus.

Mr. Lincoln has been central to situating Tom and Bob in leadership positions. His favoritism is obvious in everything he does that involves a wide body of students, and is keenly felt among the girls, but also some guys. Every student asked regarding where Tom and Bob's get their leadership authority knew that it came from Mr. Lincoln. This has caused jealousy from those that do not have it and protectiveness and defensiveness from those that do. Even Mr. Lincoln became defensive regarding his relationship with Tom, who "hangs out" at his house often. While Mr. Lincoln feels that his relationship with Tom is more like father - son, he fails to see that many of the other students would like the same relationship with him. Many are frustrated that Tom, who is new and antagonistic toward them, receives the "good" attention from Mr. Lincoln.

Some of the girls accuse Tom and Bob of playing a game with Mr. Lincoln, of being the way he wants them to be in front of him, but then changing into less "godly" men when away from him. Often in the informal conversations at study hall and free time, Tom and Bob would still talk about things with attitudes that would contradict Mr. Lincoln. Other times, Tom and Bob would often put people down for not thinking like they do, something Mr. Lincoln has stated he would not agree to although he doesn't always show it in deed.

The problem of Mr. Lincoln's favoritism is shown in an incident where Mr. Lincoln left Tom in charge one day while Mr. Lincoln was gone, over older female students who had been there longer. Harriet, a junior and the girl who has been at the school the longest and is considered by most to be the school's most stable person, academically and spiritually, says that some people resent the fact that Tom and Bob are the spiritual leaders. She says that at times they "push the boundaries and team up and almost attack people. I think this is why some people jump to find things that they've said or done that are wrong."

Mr. Lincoln openly admits he plays favorites with some of the boys, especially Tom, because they are on a "spiritual" track and Mr. Lincoln feels called to mentor them. He does not feel he can mentor the girls because of the risk of anything looking improper. This concern of propriety is felt throughout the evangelical community, and it

is standard practice for men and women, where one is in ministerial leadership, not to be alone together.

However, while the girls admit they are jealous of Mr. Lincoln's favoritism, they also have little interest in having more than an academic relationship with him anyway. They feel as if they have no one to go to that they can trust. Mrs. Hunter is their main teacher and have her at least twice a day, but they consider her untrustworthy and unreliable. Their sense of isolation from an authority that already exhibits submission intensifies their willingness to silence and submit themselves, since in Nancy's words, they "only have each other."

I asked Barbara, who is also Tom's best friend, what it would be like without Tom and Bob:

> Barbara: The girls would be more of the leaders. The guys would not be as persuaded to follow Jesus. They would follow the example of James and Stewart [the school's party-hearty rebels] more.
> Researcher: Why are Tom and Bob so powerful?
> Barbara: Their past involvements. They were very popular in their own areas before they came here. They're used to taking charge. They are just more aggressive, even though they are new to knowing God.

Barbara also made this comment concerning the girls and leadership:

> The girls are scared. They've always been the leaders, but they weren't the leaders the right way. Now there's a push to grow toward God, but they don't know how. The girls were leading us toward the world, not God.

During an informal discussion concerning leadership in the school, the girls agreed that it was better to have boys in leadership positions who could only do a half-way job than for girls to be in leadership and do it one hundred percent. To them, God wants men in leadership regardless of who has more skill. Women are only allowed to take over when there is no man available or willing. In their theology, this is the best way for God to bless them spiritually.

Beyond the problem of submission, two other factors help to explain the socialization of the girls at Charity. The strong, overbearing nature of the few boys in power has a silencing effect on the girls, which in turn acts to keep their true feelings regarding their role hidden. The structural component allowing this "silent submission" to occur is the lack of absolutes in both doctrine and rules that the school currently

allows. Without clear doctrines, the girls feel powerless in the face of strong males to state their opinions on these issues. Even the rules of the school, which beyond a dress code are only to do as the Bible would have you to do, are ambiguous enough to allow attitudes and actions that foster the submission and silencing of the girls.

Examples at the Intersection

> We are responsible to enable each of our students to know that she or he is a full partner in the learning community, a partner made worthy by God. We need to understand how we are socialized to fit molds. And we need to acknowledge how those molds can misshape the lives God asks us to live in praise and service to Him.
> - Lorna Van Gilst (1993)

Submission is not only believed but enacted. Female students exhibit it in obvious ways, such as not voicing opinions, to more specific and unassuming ways, such as giving up prime real estate (preferred seating) in the classroom seating pattern to the boys. One example of "putting them in their place" is that the boys give the girls their prime real estate on chapel day when the girls have to wear dresses.

Mrs. Hunter is aware that she also enacts submission and is frustrated that at times she feels it is expected of her by Mr. Lincoln. This long passage from her interview shows not only the faculty role in submission, but the students' attitudes as well.

> Hunter: And I also know that if I butt heads with [Mr. Lincoln], and even once in a while Mr. Webster, [science teacher] it's hard for me, because I do automatically submit to them. I was not raised as a Christian. I was raised by an Atheist and a Mormon. This has all come within the last 4 years of me being at this school. Now, I automatically... it's like if Mr. Webster is talking, I should be quiet, cause he's a guy. And I see how I've been re-programmed into it. And you know, I might know more about it than he does. But I also see...
> Researcher: Do you think that's feeding into the kids then?
> Hunter: Yes. And it feels good that whenever there's a big problem at this school, I can turn and say, Mr. Webster you deal with it, even though I should, at most schools I'd have seniority. Mr. Webster you deal with it, because I can't make the kids mind. It's kinda like, "when your Daddy gets home." I don't have to be the bad guy. I get to kiss their boo-boos. And we play good cop, bad cop, so bad. It's even orchestrated. "I'm going to go up (whispering). It's

like...we were trying to figure out if James was smoking and the first thing out one of our mouths was, you go give him a hug and say "you smell funny" and then I'll come and say, Ms. Hunter said you smell funny...blah, blah, blah....and then we'll yell at him, OK. We actually orchestrated it.

Researcher: And it worked?

Hunter: It worked. But they have to... It's kinda like, you need to be strong and you need to be compassionate, and that's...

Researcher: It's roles. But do you think women need to submit to men outside of marriage?

Hunter: No. Well, your authority (needs to be submitted to)

Researcher: Authority in general.

Hunter: I never looked at submitting as a joyful thing. I always looked at it as a pull my teeth out and I will if I have to.

Researcher: But it's funny that these girls, that's really a big deal for them, this submission thing.

Hunter: Really?

Researcher: Yeah, it's come up.

Hunter: See, I see them automatically submit. They might not realize it, but it's ingrained in them. In their little psyche, I see them do it automatically. And they also do the enjoying part of it. Like Louise will come down and say, 'My battery's dead.' And automatically she knows that one of the guys in the class is going to rescue her. And Becky stood up and, "Ooh, I can fix it" and Louise says, "No, no, no let Darren do it.' They enjoy knowing that those boys are going to take care of them, no matter what. And I enjoy knowing that I can go into the teacher's lounge and knowing that I can scream and bawl and Mr. Webster will pat me on the head and I can submit to him and I can lay it, it sounds really bad, but I can lay it at the foot of the cross and put it on his shoulders. I can put it on Mr. Webster's shoulders, and at the foot of the cross, and I can walk away and not worry about it. Now, they [the men] don't have that luxury. And I look at it as a big luxury.

Through such an example of submission, along with the obvious male favoritism, the girls have increasingly become silenced, knowing that their voice will not be heard. Their voluntary and involuntary example of silencing is felt through out the school.

Letting their voice be heard is the hardest thing for the girls to accomplish, according to Harriet. Angela, a sophomore, says, "If you voice your opinion too strongly, no one listens to what you actually say. They just hear the strongness of the words." Barbara has perhaps the most telling report. She says, "Some girls are silenced toward God by the guys." Being "silenced toward God", not having the fullest possible relationship with Him, is the exact opposite purpose of a Christian school.

When the girls lost their roles of leadership, they seem to also have lost their voice. Barbara has this understanding of the problem of the girls turning the leadership over to the boys and the resulting loss of voice:

> The girls had prayer for the guys to be leaders. The guys wanted to start standing up, telling the girls to calm down and let them stand up. The teachers also did this. The problem came that the girls who were praying were not outgoing. The girls got scared of Tom and Bob and their viewpoint. You think, "They're the spiritual leaders," so I don't want to stand up and disagree. The guys will stop and ask what you think, but expect us to agree with them.

Barbara, along with most of the girls, reported that the boys, usually Tom and Bob, would quote Bible verses at the girls and the girls would often stop talking because it was easier than trying to fight with the boys over verses they felt they might not know well enough.

Tom and Bob receive the brunt of the criticism because they are outgoing and forceful. They are so sure of themselves and their Christianity that they have a hard time understanding why anyone else would not feel that way. This has created an environment where only the strongest opinion is heard and learning the other's position is not necessary since "I'm so sure of my own opinion."

Harriet supports this and says,

> If you don't agree [with the popular opinion], you are bashed for your beliefs. Others say things like 'You're wrong, you need to believe this way.' They [Tom and Bob] want agreement and when you don't, they say that you don't believe in God.

Considering the insecurity of adolescents regarding the way they are perceived among their peers, especially in an environment that makes judgments based on Christian conduct, this type of silencing is very effective.

When asked how they let their voice be heard at Charity, students responded in diverse ways. Becky, a senior, states plainly that "only a few share their opinions while everyone else is too intimidated to share." Angela, a sophomore, tries to "word mine to where they will not take it as an offense," while Nancy, a sophomore, doesn't voice her opinion sometimes because "I'm afraid of being proved wrong or screaming at someone." (Nancy worries a lot about losing her temper.)

Harriet says that she usually agrees [with the popular opinion], so everyone listens to her. Harriet does make this observation, "I've noticed that people who don't spend all their time spouting off opinions are more likely to be listened to." This contradicts the idea that those with the most forceful personalities are the ones listened to, but since Harriet is listened to, she may not understand those that are not. Louise sheds a more positive, some might say even more Christian, light on the subject of letting your opinions be heard. She states, "I don't feel like my voice is heard, but I know that my actions and attitudes are being seen by everyone."

Vacating the Intersection

So what if I pray like a girl!
T-shirt worn by Nancy

Girls at Charity Christian School have many different factors acting against them that range from the macro issues of church and society, to micro issues of favoritism and teasing. This study shows not only the reality of the lived experience of the girls in their roles at Charity, but also provides a glimpse at the socializing power of religious institutions on one of its marginalized elements, female children.

Gender socialization is occurring at Charity in common and predictable ways. The girls are inevitably better behaved, more academically minded, and more socially aware than their male counterparts. Teachers expect the girls to be more compliant and the boys to be more disruptive. Both female and male students model those behaviors typical to their gendered adolescence, such as appearance issues and peer acceptance. Charity exhibits gendered socialization much like any other school, although the girls have larger socialization issues regarding chastity and purity than most public schools.

Religious socialization, if separated, occurs to a greater degree than gendered socialization. Expectations of "godly" behavior, where actions align themselves both to Biblical principles and Christian tradition, are "preached" not only by the faculty, but by the students themselves. Spiritual undertones present themselves in every facet of the school, and activities in and out of the class assume and expect a Christian position from all parties. Shaping of the mind is secondary to the shaping of the soul, and "the spirit" can lead students and teachers at any time to work on spiritual aspects of their lives instead of the academic.

Gendered and religious socialization at Charity is not unusually different from that found at a school, church, or church-school. However, the combination of the two into a new notion, *gendered religious socialization*, provides a distinct glimpse of the reality of being a Christian girl. Charity provides a definition for this in terms of notions of submission and silencing. It is clear that 2000 year old expectations of female behavior are still prevalent in the church, as well as Christian schools.

The evangelical Christian religion is full of contradictions and discrepancies, so often it is discarded as oppressive and old-fashioned. However, naively dismissing the influence of the church on anyone's life is foolhardy, and to ignore its influence on the ones who have a loss of voice, female children, would be a transgression.

If the school were based in a stronger doctrinal setting, especially as regards submission theology, it might help the girls, but it also might hinder. It is obvious the girls feel powerless to change because they do not know where they stand, within the school and within the evangelical religion. The contradictions that exist between what even the boys feel about the girls, let alone what the girls feel about themselves in terms of their role in the church, acts as a powerful agent in their silence and their submission. They are caught in the powerful tug-of-war that currently exists in the evangelical church regarding the submission of women and what the true biblical interpretation of that passage really is (Gallagher and Smith, 1999).

It is not only the existing structures, such as the teasing, authority and leadership roles, and theology that allow for the submission problem at Charity. The problem also lies with the girls themselves and why they gave up their power. Jesus asks his followers to lay down their wants and to give up their individuality, in other words, he asks for submission to him. When the girls quietly submit in both practical and theoretical ways, they are merely being the good Christians they have been asked to be by the religious institution that shapes their lives.

The problem of submission at Charity provides an excellent example of gendered religious socialization and the contradictory experiences these young Christian girls go through to be "women of God." They must at once be true to themselves, their feelings of self-worth and their desires, as well as be true to what they have been taught is expected of them by God, that they lay down themselves not only to God but to men.

Currently, the girls at Charity are living what Mary Pipher (1994, p. 22) describes as a "pressure to split into true and false selves." Their peace comes in that they have obeyed and done the right thing according to what they have been told by their main

religious institution, the school, to feel is the truth. Their disquiet comes in that while they have been true to God and school, they feel that they have failed to be true to themselves.

As gender struggles to "come out of the closet" in many evangelical churches, it will struggle even harder to be heard at Christian schools, an area of fierce protectiveness among the churches. If the rumors / predictions of a mass pullout of Christian children from the public schools becomes reality, the need to address gender will become even greater as more girls, accustomed to better, or different, treatment will demand to be heard. At Charity, the girls who fought hardest to be heard and not forced into submission, were the ones who spent most of their lives in public school. The girls who willingly gave up their leadership roles and believed in the prevailing submission theology were the ones who had never gone, or had barely gone, to public schools. If Christian schools do not, as Wagner (1997) has suggested, want their children raised in a bubble anymore, then issues such as race, gender, sexuality, and religion will have to be examined with more thought to "the other".

Important to those in public school settings, is the need to understand that the forces shaping a girl's gendered identity come in many different forms. An evangelical girl in a public school will have resistance issues that involve more than just appearance and voice. Issues such as chastity and dating, for example, have new meaning when the church begins preaching that dating is wrong, a current trend, started with a popular book, I Kissed Dating Good-bye (Harris, 1997) which advocates not dating until a serious relationship that will probably lead to marriage comes along. If ten percent of evangelical Christian children attend private schools (Baer & Carper, 1998), ninety percent are in the public schools and the need to understand the background and current trends of evangelicalism and gender should also be important.

Charity Christian School provides a unique opportunity to see a fragment of the intersection of religion and gender. In hopes that by looking at gender in a microcosm, the macrocosm might be informed, this study presents findings that point to one battleground largely ignored by society, children's education outside the public schools, specifically education in religious schools. Issues of religion are considered personal and not part of the public sphere, but feminist theory would have the private made public so that the inequities might be seen. Hopefully this study has enlightened the intersection of gender and religion.

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